



Dr. Bard's Address.—This excellent Address on the importance of a regular medical education is particularly interesting at this moment, when the nation is supposed to be on the eve of war. How must it shock every man of humanity to hear this eminent physician declare it, as a solemn fact, that so great was the want of medical and surgical talents, at the commencement of the revolution, that the American army lost more men by it, than from the muskets and bayonets of their enemies?

ADDRESS,

OF SAMUEL BARD, M. D. delivered before the Dutchess Medical Society, on the 14th day of November, 1809.

GENTLEMEN,

In complying with your request of last spring, I believe I cannot do better than recall your attention to the subject on which we were then employed; the importance of the medical character, and the culture necessary to form an accomplished physician. Our governments, and I hope our people in general begin to be sensible, that knowledge and virtue, as they are the foundations of every thing that is excellent in human nature, ought likewise to be the foundation of a medical education, and that the man to whom they commit the care of their own lives, as well as the lives of their wives and children, and dearest connexions should possess at least as many advantages of education, as the lawyer to whom they commit the care of their estates, or the mechanic whom they employ to mend their watches.—On this subject all are agreed in speculation, yet so little attention is paid to it in practice, that one would imagine most people think a physician is formed by inspiration, and that (according to the dangerous and absurd tenet of those who assert, that the greatest sinner will make the greatest saint) they believe the most ignorant and uninformed man will make the best Doctor.—But alas! it is too true, that in general we are neither wise nor good by nature, and that "to train up a man" in the way he should go is at least as necessary in medicine, as it is in religion or morals.

This being confessed let us enquire, what is the proper education of a physician and surgeon: in attempting which, however, I shall confine myself to a few general observations, and leave the detail of particulars to the Professors of our Colleges.

From the intricate and delicate structure of the humane frame, from the variety of accidents to which it is exposed, from the sudden attack of many diseases, from the variety of their symptoms, and the complicated nature of their causes, as well as the different effects of the same cause upon different constitutions, a physician is often called on to exercise the most acute judgement upon the shortest notice; suddenly to form conclusions of the greatest moment, in cases where life with all its blessings, or its greatest miseries, may hang upon the decision of a moment. Good sense, an improved understanding, and a happy talent of quick and accurate discrimination, are, therefore, the first requisits in the character of a physician; and of consequence the boy who is intended for this profession, should be early subjected to all the discipline of a regular education—as soon as he can read and write his own language he should be sent to a good grammar school, & thence he should pass through all the classes of college, where by the time he is eighteen, or twenty years of age, he may not only acquire the rudiments, but with tolerable application make considerable progress in classical mathematical, and philosophical learning. Experience has proved this, if not the best, the most certain mode, and the only one which is in the power of most people to improve the understanding, to enlarge the powers of the mind, and to acquire steady habits of application and industry: by which such talents as a man possesses from nature will be carried to the greatest degree of perfection, and without which it is in vain to hope for excellence in any profession. To an improved understanding, and to habits of application and diligence, the young man who aspires to the character of an accomplished Physician, must add strict morals, abstemious temperance, and a humane and benevolent temper; to all which no profession makes more frequent appeals than that of medicine.

With such acquirements he is qualified to enter upon the particular study of his profession; which is undoubtedly best begun by the

study of anatomy, chemistry, botany, and other preliminary branches, at a public school; where only they can be taught. The knowledge of diseases and their cures, is best acquired at a public Hospital, under the guidance of the physicians and surgeons; appointed not only to relieve the distresses of the poor but to make their private misfortunes a public benefit, by pointing out to the pupils, the characteristic symptoms of their diseases, their causes, consequences, and, methods of cure. There is no doubt but that this is the best mode of studying Physic and Surgery; but it will be some time, probably many years, before the greater number of our medical students will pursue this course; and there will always be many who from pecuniary considerations will wish to avoid the necessary expense attending it, and who will aim at a professional character, by the shorter and less expensive mode of private tuition, under a practising physician.—To such it should be recommended to attend upon the public schools for at least one course of lectures, and upon the Hospital for one year, by which they will acquire some idea of the extent of their profession, and at least learn their own deficiencies. Indeed it is to be wished that ere long our government may render such attendance at least for one year, necessary to the obtaining a licence to practice any branch of medicine; and at the same time amend our present law, so as to prevent any person coming from the neighboring states, and entering on the practice of medicine among us, with less acquirements and under testimonials less to be depended on, than those we expect from our own pupils.

From this slight sketch, we discover the wisdom of our legislature in the patronage they have lately afforded to medical education: and the incalculable advantages which the public derives from the unexampled liberality of the Professors of both our medical schools, in granting to the County Societies, the great privilege to send one pupil to each school every year, to receive the benefit of their instruction free of expence—a regulation founded in the wisest policy, the truest patriotism, and the best judgment; but evidently arising from the emulation and rivalry, which have been excited between the two schools: from which we have already begun to experience the most happy effects, and by which the general character of our medical men will very soon be greatly improved. But these singular advantages in a great measure depend upon the liberal and impartial view which the Legislature may take of this subject, and must be materially lessened if not wholly lost, if through a blind partiality to one school or an inexcusable neglect of the other this generous competition is suffered to subside.

Convinced as I am of the great and general importance of correct medical instruction, and anxious that our schools should be fostered by necessary patronage—I cannot but regret the failure of the proposal made last year in our Legislature, for the purchase of Doctor Hosack's Botanic Garden. It would be too tedious at present to point out how much medicine may be benefited—how greatly the arts may be enriched, and how many of the comforts, the pleasures, and even the necessities of life may be improved by such an institution. As an appendage to a medical school it has become indispensable; and if we suffer this Garden of Doctor Hosack's to sink, as sink it must if left in the hands of an individual; we give a decided advantage to every medical school in the U. States, as well as in almost every other country, over our own. In point of expence it makes very little difference to a young man who must go from home for his education, whether he goes to Boston, Philadelphia or New-York.—He will always go, where for the least expence he can obtain the greatest advantages—it becomes therefore decidedly the interest of the State to render our own seminaries as perfect as possible. I hope therefore that this institution, as well as both our medical schools may continue to receive a decided patronage from our government—and that there never will be wanting in our Legislature enlightened individuals, who will reiterate their application on the subject until they shall convince the less informed.—Much gentlemen will be in your power; a physician is or ought to be the friend of his patients—and if you would exert that influence which so intimate a connection affords you; in a government like ours, you cannot fail of success in every laudable measure. I venture likewise to recommend it to you in your Corporate capacity, and that you will instruct your Delegate to use his influence with the members of the State Society and the University to accomplish it.

One of the strongest arguments in favor of our medical schools, and one which must recommend them irresistibly to the patronage of an enlightened Legislature, is, that they afford the only means of training young men for the public service in case of war. Every dictate of humanity, and every principle of policy, demand, that due attention shall be paid in time of peace, to educating medical men for the army and navy; that in case of war those unhappy scenes, and that aggravated misery, may not be renewed, which we have once experienced; when our sick and wounded

soldiers and seamen were in a great measure left to their fate, or what was perhaps worse, put in to the hands of ignorant and unexperienced men. It is a painful recollection, but too true, that at the commencement of our revolutionary war, medical and surgical talents were among the greatest wants of our armies, and one from which they suffered more than from the muskets and bayonets of their enemies. Although therefore we may have reason to hope that the miseries of war may for a long time be kept from our happy shores; yet the wisdom of being always prepared for it is acknowledged by all. But the only way to be prepared for a supply of good field surgeons and a well appointed hospital, is to encourage and always keep up, a well regulated system of medical education in the country.

Before I conclude, I beg you will permit me to point out the great and decided interest which the more distant and thinly inhabited counties of the State, have in applying their weight and influence to obtain from the Legislature the equal patronage solicited for our medical schools. The situation of these counties as it respects population and wealth, will for a long time, in a great measure, preclude the settlement of Physicians and Surgeons of education and talents among them; unless they can educate young men of merit from among themselves to those professions. Strangers will naturally seek a settlement where with less fatigue, they can hope for greater emoluments; but local attachments, family affection and interest all conspire to prompt the sons to settle in the neighborhood of their parents. It becomes therefore to these counties a matter of the greatest moment to facilitate the means by which at the least expence, they can obtain from their medical students the best opportunities of instruction. It is a fact that in many parts of the new counties respectable medical aid is not to be procured within 20, 30, or 40 miles, and it is equally true that this want of medical assistance is one great obstacle to the settlement of men of fortune with their families in those counties.—The distressing sight of a child languishing on a bed of sickness—of a beloved wife in an hour of extreme distress, or of a husband wretching under the torture of a fractured bone; whilst at the same time it is not possible to afford them the comfort and relief of a physician or surgeon in whom we can place any confidence, is sufficient to deter any considerate man, and as long as these circumstances continue, will prevent many a wealthy settler, who would willingly brave all the other inconveniences and privations of a new country. Can there then be a doubt, but that if the more respectable inhabitants, and proprietors of these counties, as well as the members of the Legislature give this subject the attention it deserves, but, that they will join in promoting the most certain, the only certain means of removing so great an evil.—It is singular that the plan here proposed of encouraging our medical schools, should have received during the last session of our Legislature its most decided and effectual opposition from some members from the new counties which will undeniably be most benefited by it. It surely can have happened only from the plan having been brought in a partial manner before them; and from their not having given it all the attention it deserved. To have it in their power to educate two young men annually from each county in the best manner, and at little or no expence, must surely be a very desirable object to them; and the means by which it can be accomplished can hardly fail to meet their approbation and support.*

The wisdom of the Legislature, and the liberality of our medical Professors have suggested the idea, and I hope already laid the foundation of this scheme; which, if ever matured, I will venture to predict will give to the State of New-York one of the best medical establishments in the world. By the emulation which will be excited and competition which equal patronage will keep up between the two schools, a constant supply of able and learned teachers will be ensured, and the exertion of all their talents and powers will be called forth. By the purchase of the Botanic Garden, a national ornament and most useful establishment, already brought to a great degree of perfection will be preserved: by which our medicine, our agriculture and our arts, the elegancies, and the conveniences of life will necessarily be improved, and by the free scholarships derived from the benevolent liberality of the medical professors, the talents of many an ingenious youth, will be cultivated; which otherwise will probably be buried in obscurity. Even the most distant parts of the State will soon be filled with well educated medical men; always ready in case of war to supply our armies and navies, by which the lives of our sick and wounded soldiers will be preserved—and their ranks kept filled with veterans instead of new recruits.

A plan which promises such advantages to the community, must surely merit the serious and impartial consideration of every member of our government, and if it meets their unbiased attention can hardly fail to command their cordial approbation and liberal support.

* In those countries where there are no medical societies, the judges of the Court should have the power to recommend students to the College.

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